



Meeting with SVK President

(12 April) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš introduced the SVK MOD Programme Priorities for 2016-2020 to SVK President Andrej Kiska. At the meeting, the Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces and the Minister of Defence agreed that defence and security are areas of interest that require attention on a day-to-day basis. "The provision of defence and security is the fundamental task of the State," emphasised the SVK President. He appreciated that the head of the SVK MOD is someone who has full knowledge of the subject matter, bearing in mind that at the time of his appointment as Minister of Defence he had completed over 41 years of service in the SVK Armed Forces.

"I was pleased I could introduce the SVK MOD Programme Priorities to the SVK President," said Minister Gajdoš. He emphasised that he would strive for broader society-wide and political agreement in the strategic issues of developing the defence of the State, and in drafting and adopting desirable legislative acts. "We are going to prepare a new defence strategy and to participate in the drafting of a new Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic under the patronage of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic," he noted.

In the international arena, the basic mission of the SVK MOD is to pursue the pro-European and pro-transatlantic policy direction. We are a NATO member state and we are committed to meeting our obligations. Of course, as part of promoting regional cooperation, the Visegrad 4 (V4) continues to be a priority," emphasised Minister Gajdoš.

Another priority the head of Defence wants to advance is a qualitative improvement in the readiness of the SVK Armed Forces Reserve Component. "We could use voluntary military training as a key tool for generating the Reserve Component. We believe this project will appeal to young people to a sufficient degree and, combined with other activities, it will play a role in enhancing the awareness of patriotism and home defence among our citizens," he said. At the same time, he reminded that the provision of defence is not only a duty, but also an honour for every citizen of Slovakia. Additionally, the MOD is planning to continue its modernisation process. "In doing so, we will proceed transparently, with maximal effectiveness in using financial resources," emphasised the Minister.

As SVK President Andrej Kiska remarked, it is important that the advancement of plans and the SVK Armed Forces' modernisation be concept-based, transparent and understandable. The President and the Minister of Defence also discussed international commitments. "In July, we are going to the NATO Warsaw Summit. Therefore, I have requested the Minister of Defence to initiate a thorough audit of our defence commitments vis-à-vis our Allies and to step up communications with the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, so that we know the exact status of affairs and start preparing what we come up with at the Warsaw Summit," said the Commander-in-Chief of the SVK Armed Forces.

Birthday congratulations

(12 April) SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš made a phone call to Lt Gen (retd) Ján Husák to congratulate him on his 93rd birthday. "I am immensely happy that I could get in touch with you by phone, since my busy working schedule does not allow me to come in person today," said the head of the SVK MOD. The Minister of Defence awarded Lt Gen (retd) Ján Husák with the Defence Minister's Commemorative Medal, Grade III, which was handed to him on the Minister's behalf by the State Secretary of the SVK MOD, Ivan Máčovský.

Petr Pavel appreciates Slovakia's contributions to NATO

(15 April) At the invitation of SVK Chief of Defence (CHOD) Gen Milan Maxim, the Ministry of Defence was visited by the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, General Petr Pavel, who came to Slovakia to participate in the GLOBSEC international security conference. In meeting with Gen Pavel, SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš reaffirmed the Slovak MOD's pro-European and pro-transatlantic policy direction. Both leaders are in agreement that the Slovak Republic is a stable member of the North Atlantic Alliance. "We are a NATO and EU member state and we are committed to meeting our obligations. My highest priority is to provide for the defence and security of the Slovak Republic. This is because the citizens of our country deserve it in every respect," emphasised the head of Defence. Among the topics discussed at the meeting were the preparations for the NATO Warsaw Summit and other trending developments. "I would like to express my thanks to the Slovak Republic for all of your contributions to NATO's ongoing operations and initiatives," underlined the Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, General Petr Pavel. NATO's top leader also met with SVK CHOD Gen Milan Maxim. "I do feel a need to exchange views with him and to resolve together some sticking points in the field of security," said Gen Maxim.



- On 14 April, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš, expressed his acknowledgement to the members of Military Police for rendering aid in a car accident that occurred between Zvolen and Krupina. On their way home from the exercise Ochranca 2016 (Defender 2016), the MP members witnessed the accident involving three cars. As an immediate response to the accident, they provided first aid to the parties involved in the accident and secured the accident site. The Commander and the paramedic were awarded the **Commemorative Medals of Minister of Defence**, 3rd Grade, and seven members of Military Police received Letters of Acknowledgement.

- On 16 April, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš graced with his presence the **international karate/kobudo tournament** which took place in the Bratislava sporting hall Elán. The jubilee 20th edition of the event Slovakia Open saw contestants from the ranks of children, youth and adults. "I am fond of events bursting with energy and positive atmosphere. What is more, sport is connecting people, fires people with enthusiasm, restores vitality and is a source of energy in everyday life," said the Head of the Defence Department.

- On Friday, 15 April, the selection procedure with respect to the **voluntary military preparation** was terminated. Altogether 129 candidates, out of whom 33 were women, have applied. The final number of participants will only be known after undergoing a medical check up and psychological tests. The greatest interest in the voluntary military preparation was recorded in the region of Košice. The twelve-week-training of the first voluntary soldiers is supposed to start in July and should last until the end of September in the Training Battalion Martin. During the first nine weeks, the participants should develop the basic skills and acquire the basic knowledge. During the three following weeks of specialized training, they will gain the requisite skills and knowledge in one of the four military specializations – a rifleman/gunner, engineer/sapper, decontamination expert and signaller. The Defence Department will thoroughly evaluate the pilot project and will adopt all the necessary measures to ensure that the young people will view the project as attractive.

- On 12 April, the nomination round of the competition aimed at announcing the **best gunner** on a level of the 2nd mechanized brigade was held on the premises of the Michalovce-based self-propelled artillery division. The artillery experts from the self-propelled artillery division Michalovce, the 21st combined mechanized battalion Trebišov and the 22nd mechanized battalion Michalovce took part therein. Proficiency and expertise of 21 professional soldiers were put to the test. As a winner was announced Capt Jaroslav Kriš, Commander of the 1st firing battery of the self-propelled artillery division. Capt Peter Jankaj, Commander of the reconnaissance battery of the self-propelled artillery division, ended up in second place and Capt Slavomír Pristaš, Chief of the operational section of the self-propelled artillery division, ended up third. The winners have thereby qualified for the SVK Land Forces' Best Gunner competition.

- The **Military Police motorcyclists training** started on 11 April in Trenčín, with thirteen motorcycle drivers from the ranks of MP and six motorcycles Honda VFR 800X Crossrunner taking part. The training programme, developed and prepared in concert with the instructor from the Office for protection of the state officials and diplomatic missions at the SVK Ministry of Interior, is supposed to ensure sharing the experience and lessons learned in protecting and escorting the very important persons (VIP) and harmonization of the procedures to be followed when performing the tasks linked with the diplomatic protocol activities and with protection of and escorting the VIPs. Such training will be most useful for the Military Police in terms of their preparedness to perform the tasks related to Slovakia's presidency in the Council of the European Union from July until December.

- On 11 April, Chief of the General Staff of the Serbian Armed Forces **Gen Ljubiša Diković** made a visit to Sector 4, UNFICYP operation in Cyprus, where Slovakia is a Lead Nation. General Diković was welcomed by the Force Commander Maj Gen Kristin Lund. Gen Diković made a visit to the UN positions in the town of Pyla, where the Serbian troops are dislocated. In the Famagusta-based Gen M. R. Štefanik Camp he was welcomed by Sector 4 Commander Lt Col Jozef Paňko. Gen Diković expressed satisfaction with the performance of tasks of the Serbian troops and highly appreciated professional cooperation between the Slovak and Serbian contingents.

Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš meets with American and British diplomats

(14 April) Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš received US Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Liam Wasley. The key topics of discussion were the cooperation between the countries and the introduction of the Slovak Republic's Defence and Security Priorities. According to the Minister, the defence cooperation between the SVK REP and the USA, especially with the Indiana National Guard, as well as that between the Special Operations Forces (SOF) of both countries, has been intensive. "We appreciate the cooperation with the USA in modernising the SVK AF, the intense communications at all levels, as well as the financial assistance from the US Government's Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) programmes," said Peter Gajdoš.



According to Minister Gajdoš, the top priorities in the first half of 2016 include delivering the readiness and deployability of the Visegrad 4 EU Battlegroup; completing the preparations of a mechanized brigade; formulating a new defence strategy; participating in the

Military Intelligence Director

(15 April) On 14 April, Col Lubomír Skuhra was relieved of his post as Military Intelligence Director (MDI). Subsequently, on 15 April, Brig Gen Ján Balciar was appointed to this post. SVK Minister of Defence has known and cooperated with J. Balciar since the times when he held the position of 1st Deputy Chief of the SVK General Staff and respects him as a recognized expert in the field of intelligence services. The Minister of Defence believes that Brig Gen Balciar's contribution to a further development of the intelligence services and effective international cooperation will be most valuable. SVK Minister of Defence has full confidence in Brig Gen Balciar and expressed his support for the new MDI.

Minister at GLOBSEC



(15 April) The changed security environment and increasing threats like terrorism or extremism require closer cooperation with the allies and partners. This is the point that the SVK Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš emphasized at GLOBSEC Conference, where he conducted negotiations with the international partners. With the Germany's Federal Minister of Defence Ursula von der Leyen they had a discussion about the current security challenges. His German counterpart raised the opportunity to share their experience of writing the White Paper, which document is currently being prepared.

During the talks he held with his Czech counterpart Martin Stropnický, Peter Gajdoš accentuated that for him, it is crucial that the relations between our two countries remain above standard. Minister Stropnický expressed interest in the Defence Department's priorities as defined in the Government's manifesto commitments.

NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow positively views the fact that Mr. Gajdoš, prior to his appointment as the new Minister of Defence, pursued a career of a professional soldier. I would only welcome having more former professional soldiers in a capacity as Minister. This is particularly true now that the security situation is worse than ever before and we are faced with ever-present threats," he said. The Minister informed A. Vershbow of the Defence Department's priorities as defined in the Government's manifesto commitments. Among the issues they addressed during the negotiation were the upcoming Warsaw Summit and defence expenditures.

On the margins of GLOBSEC, Peter Gajdoš held meetings with his Hungarian counterpart István Simicskó and with the Georgia's Minister of Defence Tinatin Khidasheli.

The Minister informed his partners from other countries that in pursuit of the priorities stipulated in the Government's Programme Declaration of Intent he would like to seek wider social and political consensus on the strategic issues of strengthening state defence, as well as on preparing and enacting legislation as required. At GLOBSEC, the Head of the Defence Department met with a personal friend of his, Gen John R. Allen, a former commander of the allied forces in Afghanistan, credited with having been one of the most influential allied commanders in Afghanistan.

drafting of the Security Strategy of the Slovak Republic, with the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic being its main guarantor. "What we need and want is broad dialogue across both the government and the non-government sectors in formulating the new security strategy," noted minister.

On 14 April, Minister of Defence Peter Gajdoš met with His Excellency Mr Andrew John Garth, Her Majesty's Ambassador of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Slovak Republic. They discussed the current topics of bilateral cooperation between the countries and the SVK MOD Programme Priorities. The Minister appreciated the defence cooperation in the field of training and welcomed the participation of a RAF Squadron in an air combat training exercise with mixed Slovak-British air crews on the HAWK aircraft. The head of the SVK MOD then updated the British ambassador on the SVK MOD Programme Priorities for the upcoming period.